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| AUTHOR | Ediger, Marlow |
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ABSTRACT

Teachers need to think of and bring into being classroom scenes which motivate reading. When discussing a room environment for reading, the first thing which comes to mind is an attractive bulletin board display. A second decorative item to encourage student reading is celebrity pictures on the wall with the word, "READ," underneath them. Third, an appealing wall chart could contain vital new words read by students in the classroom. Fourth, students might view and listen to video tapes on selected library book writers. Certain criteria need to be followed when emphasizing a quality children's literature curriculum. Library books should be: on varied topics and diverse reading levels; related, in part, to ongoing lessons and units of study; read by teachers to assist students in making reading selections as well as to tell students interesting items from a book; available for all curriculum areas such as social studies, math, science, art, music as well as for the literature curriculum; award winning; read to children by the classroom teacher; read and discussed in peer group settings; available for bibliotherapy use; and be meaningful and contain features such as imagery, characterization, setting, and plot. Teachers may emphasize a variety of activities which make use of ideas read in books. Literature needs to become an integral part of the curriculum and expand the reader's world vicariously. It can also stimulate creative writing activities. Through inservice education teachers can learn to use children's literature effectively in the curriculum. (NKA)

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# Change and Challenge in the Literature Curriculum.

by Marlow Ediger

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## CHANGE AND CHALLENGE IN THE LITERATURE CURRICULUM

The room environment is very important to learners in stressing the importance of the reading curriculum. A fascinating environment needs to be in the offing which encourages pupil reading. Higher standards are being emphasized for pupils to achieve in reading with state mandated objectives and related tests to ascertain pupil progress. Teachers need to think of and bring into being classroom scenes which motivate reading. Which ideas need to be implemented in a challenging reading environment?

### A Challenging Environment for Reading

When discussing a room environment for reading, the first thing which comes to a person's attention is an attractive bulletin board display. The author when supervising university student teachers in the public schools was greatly impressed with several displays. One display had several book jackets of new library books available for children to read. The book jackets were very colorful and attracted learner's attention to reading. There was a caption entitled, "We love to read these books!" Underneath each book jacket, there was a brief summary of a library book. The main ideas expressed here told a little bit about the major character of each book. The contents chosen for the main ideas drew pupil reading engagement to the contents. The teacher pointed to the bulletin board display as she discussed the ideas therein to whet pupils' reading appetites.

A second decorative item to encourage pupil reading which I observed in supervising university student teachers in the public schools was celebrity pictures on the wall which had the words READ underneath each. The large celebrity pictures were George Burns, Barbara Walters, and Peter Jennings. Pupils viewed the illustrations and asked questions of each other pertaining to the lives of each. This appeared to be motivator for each young readers.

Third, an appealing wall chart contained vital words read by pupils in the classroom. These new words, suggested for recording by learners, were printed on the chart by the teacher. Pupils might refer to the chart with a brief definition of each listed word, as necessary to decode and define, to continue meaningful reading in their basal or library book. A committee of pupils had decorated the borders of the chart with the use of

colored pencils and crepe' paper.

Fourth, pupils might view and listen to video tapes on selected library book writers. A popular video was on Maurice Sendak, writer of Where the Wild Things Are. The videos were at a learning station located away from distracting readers in the classroom. Thus, a small enclosed classroom area had an attractive entrance sign entitled "Videos on Library Books and their Authors." Inside, five pupils at one time could observe a video of their own choosing.

A second learning station had head phones for listening to a cassette when reading a library book. The content on the audio aided the pupil to identify words when following along in his/her library book in reading the related words. Pupils were not to be hindered from reading library books even thought they lacked selected word recognition skills! Comprehension cards could be completed by the pupil after finishing reading a library book. The library books were neatly shelved with a nearby shelf for obtaining and orderly returning the head phone sets (See Ediger and Rao, 2001, Chapter Thirteen)).

## Providing for Individual Differences

There are certain criteria which need to be followed when emphasizing a quality children's literature curriculum. Thus, library books need to be

* on varied topics and on diverse reading levels. Each pupil needs to be able to find an engaging book to read which will improve reading skills and comprehension.
* related, in part, to ongoing lessons and units of study. An integrated reading program helps pupils to perceive how content gained from reading is useful in school and in society.
* read by teachers in order to assist pupils in making reading selections as well as to tell pupils interesting items from a book. Pupils who cannot settle down to read a library book may be helped by the teacher in making a selection.
* available for all curriculum areas such as social studies, mathematics, science, art, music, and physical education as well as for the literature curriculum. Interests and intelligences of pupil vary. Thus, a learner should be able to locate a book to read which harmonizes with personal interest and intelligences (See Gardner, 1993).
* award winning such as the Newbery, Caldecott, and Mark Twain Awards. Award winning library books provide an opportunity for making good selections in purchasing good library books.

* read to pupils in the classroom by the teacher and in the home setting by parents to their offspring. Most pupils enjoy listening to good literature. Sometimes books which have been read to pupils provide a basis for pupil choice in reading the same books individually and personally.

* emphasized for reading in school Book Clubs. Time needs to be available for pupils to choose a Club which meets personal needs. For some, a Literature or Book Club will be highly appropriate. Here, pupils may read and discuss quality literature and, perhaps, whet appetites for reading these same or similar books.

* read and discussed in peer group settings. Peers have tremendous influence over each other. They may, not only through discussions, but also through direct recommendations entice pupils to read suggested library books.

* on hand with an adequate number and with high quality on minority groups. With the nation consisting of minorities and recent immigrants from all over the world, it behooves the school to develop multicultural understandings among pupils. Good human relations and acceptance of others is a very valuable goal to stress in the literature curriculum as well as to strengthen a democracy.

* available dealing with bibliotherapy. Pupils may possess diverse handicaps and problems. Library books dealing with bibliotherapy can help a reader to accept his/ her own handicap as well as accept those who possess physical, social, and other kinds of difficulties.

* interesting to children. Interest is a powerful factor in learning. Pupils do tend to select library books which capture their own individual, personal attention.

* meaningful and contain features such as imagery, characterization, setting, and plot, among others. Meaning and understanding are two concepts which are musts when pupils read a given selection. Each person should read to attach meaning to content read. Merely reading words does not meet this criterion. A synthesis of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs should stress pupils reading for understanding.

* written to enrich and extend pupil vocabularies. A major secret for success in life is to grow in vocabulary development. Reading can be a major way of increasing one's listening, speaking, and writing vocabularies (See Gunning, 2000).

Each of the above named criteria are salient to emphasize in a quality children's literature curriculum. If pupils are to improve reading abilities, then resources and motivating

methodologies need to be available. A literature rich reading curriculum may be emphasized with individualized reading whereby the leaner chooses and reads his/her own chosen library book. A conference with the teacher to assess oral reading quality and to evaluate comprehension may follow upon completion of reading the library book. Individualized reading here may replace or supplement basal reading approaches.

In addition to individualized reading programs, sustained silent reading (SSR) may be emphasized whereby everyone in a classroom chooses and reads a library book at a given time. This model may be extended to the entire school setting to include custodians, cafeteria workers and support personnel. Pupils may then perceive the values of reading when all are engaged in obtaining ideas from print discourse.

For those who have read the same paper back, a small group seminar method may be used to assess comprehension. Indepth learning might well be stressed here. Thus, pupils have comprehended the content well from reading and can discuss major and subordinate ideas with understanding (Ediger, 2002, 16- 19).

## Extension of Literary Experiences

Teachers need to have pupils make use of ideas which have been read. A variety of activities may be emphasized here. Thus, pupils may locate on a map and globe where the story took place geographically. Also, the learner may determine when the events took place as in the curriculum area of history. Geography and history are two vital areas in the social studies. Areas of interest should be stressed across the curriculum.

Second, to extend pupil experiences from reading literature, they might be challenged to read a different library book on the same topic or by the same author. Comparisons of subject matter content may be made. It is good, too, for pupils to locate information about the author of the library book read.

Third, pupils may do journal writing where reactions are written to the story read. There are a variety of possible writing activities relating to the story read. Here, a pupil may write a poem or draw an illustration pertaining to the story read. The characters or setting may also be rewritten creatively.

Fourth, a pupil may record unusual words from the story read. Clichés, idioms, metaphors, similes, among others, are generally interesting to pupils. These words may be recorded by the learner and each used in a sentence.

Fifth, there are a plethora of art activities which pupils may

use to indicate comprehension and enjoyment of reading a library book. Thus murals, dioramas, pictorial maps, and illustrated charts may be made to extend literary experiences. Group or individual endeavors might be used here (see Ediger and Rao, 2001, Chapter Twelve).

Motivated pupil reading behavior also assists in extending learner desire to read. The following are ways to motivate pupils to read:

* emphasize teacher enthusiasm for reading literature aloud to pupils. Hopefully, the enthusiasm will rub off on pupils in the classroom setting.
* mention to and briefly discuss with pupils what you (the teacher) have been reading personally in literature. Learners may then realize the importance of reading.
* stress a variety of kinds of literary experiences with pupils to include discussions, dramatizations, story telling, journal writing, and choral reading.
* use holistic methods of reading literature so that pupils obtain valuable ideas in reading. Word attack skills may be taught and used as needed after a selection has been read or when basal reading approaches are emphasized.
* find fascinating literature which engages pupils in listening when reading aloud to learners.
* emphasize quality in the literature curriculum such as characterization, setting, plot, irony, theme, and point of view, in narrative selections.
* incorporate developmentally appropriate literature. Pupils need to be successful learners and yet feel challenge to achieve optimally.
* include computers and technology in the literature curriculum (See Ediger, 1996, 145- 161).

Literature needs to become an integral part of the curriculum and expand the reader's world vicariously. Literature needs to be heard and read dally on all levels and varied topics. What children have read then may provide content for writing. It can stimulate creative writing such as in writing different kinds of

* rhymed verse including couplets, triplets, quatrains, and limericks
* syllabic poetry such as haiku and tanka
* free verse, and acrostic poetry (Tiedt, 1983).

Literature might well be be used for problem solving. Internet, for example, may then provide excellent sources for data gathering. Pupils individually, or in a committee, may

identify a problem in social studies or science. The problem must be clearly stated so that information might be secured from the internet. An hypothesis is reached and is subject to evaluation with additional study in using internet sources. Expository library books can also be used in information gathering to accept or refute the tentative hypothesis.

All teachers need to grow and achieve in children's literature and its use in the classroom. Inservice education is a must. The following are ways to enrich the teacher in using children's literature in the curriculum

* workshops sponsored by the school system
* faculty meetings involving a children's literature emphasis.
* individual teacher studies of trends in teaching children's literature.
* grade level teachers meeting together to develop proficiency in teaching literature for children.
* teachers collectively watching video clips on actual classroom sessions involving the teaching of children's literature. Each is critiqued in terms of desired standards and recommended criteria.
* enrollment in teaching children's literature classes at a nearby university.
* peers video taping their own teaching of children's literature activities and collectively analyzing results (Ediger and Rao, 2000, Chapter Six).

The above inservice education approaches stress external ways of bringing about change in children's literature experiences. Villaume And Brabham (2002) wrote:

As we sort through what we are learning, we realize that some of our modeling and guided practice is designed to stimulate change from the outside in. For example, when we ask students to focus on the questions that emerge as they read, we impose a strategy based on our knowledge of what research says about skilled readers. We select the strategy, model it, provide guided practice, and expect students to integrate it with their independent reading. Similarly, listserv members noted the effectiveness of many instructional scaffolds, or frameworks that are grounded in research describing what skillful readers do. These scaffolds include reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984), question - answer relationships (Raphael, 1986), questioning the author (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, and Kucan, 1997), and literature circle roles (Daniels, 1994). Using a scaffold based on someone else's insight on the reading process

provides teachers and students with a temporary framework that helps alter teacher- student interaction patterns, promotes personal response, and embeds strategy instruction in text reading (Fielding and Pearson, 1994). Other types of explicit comprehension instruction described by listserv members reflect procedures that engage students in the reading process from the inside out. For example, one teacher commented on the power of think alouds to "unpack our brains and show kids all the things that go on in our heads" as we read...

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